

Becoming Licensed as a Pharmacist in California

Effective January 1, 2004, California will have a new examination program for applicants who seek to become licensed as pharmacists in California. These changes were made by SB 361 (Figueroa, Chapter 361, Statutes of 2003).

The examination process will be comprised of two parts:

1. Passing the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (or NAPLEX) which is prepared by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy. For the score to be valid in California, this exam must be taken and passed after January 1, 2004.
2. Passing the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Licensure Examination for California. This exam will be developed by the California State Board of Pharmacy and will be available sometime early in 2004; we believe after March 1, 2004. (Note: this exam is different than the Multistate Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination administered by NABP.)

Both of these examinations will be given via a computer, and will be available for approved applicants to take the examination five days a week, and perhaps six days a week throughout the year.

The new exam structure replaces the board's prior written examination that was given twice a year. The board is not giving a January 2004 written examination. Instead, passing the two tests listed above will take the place of our former examination. As such, there is no November 2003 deadline to apply to take these examinations (as would have been required if the board continued to give its prior examination).

In order to give these two examinations, contracts must be in place. The California Board of Pharmacy is working to secure these contracts.

The contracts will specify various aspects of how applicants must apply to take the exams, where the exams will be given, deadlines and timelines for applications and other specifics related to the administration of the exams, and release of test scores. At this time, many details are not known.

The board believes that these contracts will be finalized in the next few months. The board's goal is to have the contracts in place so the exams can be given no later than March 2004. If so applicants who pass the exam will be eligible for licensure at the beginning of April 2004 – the same time that release of exam scores would have occurred had the board continued to give its prior exam.

After the contracts are in place, candidates will be able to take either of these examinations throughout the year at multiple locations.

Within several weeks, the board will have an application available online, which can be completed and submitted to the board. This is the first part in the application process where California will review your qualifications to take the pharmacist licensure examination.

The requirements to take the examination will remain the same. Specifically, to take the pharmacist licensure examination for California, you must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age
2. Be a graduate of a domestic school of pharmacy or be a graduate of a foreign school of pharmacy and have passed the Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Equivalency Examination.
3. Have completed at least 150 semester hours of collegiate credit, 90 of which must be from a school of pharmacy
4. Have earned at least a baccalaureate degree in a course of study devoted to pharmacy
5. Have 1,000 hours of approved pharmaceutical experience as a registered intern or one year of experience as a licensed pharmacist in another state.

If you have taken or qualified to take the California pharmacist licensure examination in the past, the board may still have your file. If you have already submitted an application for the January 2004 written examination or postponed taking the June 2003 written examination, the board will soon mail you an information packet detailing the application requirements. The board will apply your \$155 application fee to the application fee for the new examination.

If you failed the June 2003 California Licensure Examination, you will need to submit a new application (as stated above, this form will soon be available on the board's Web site).

If you have failed the California licensure exam four times, you are required to complete 16 units of remedial education in pharmacy coursework in an ACPE-approved school of pharmacy.

If you wish to take the NAPLEX exam before California has finalized the contract for the new exams, you may apply for licensure as a pharmacist in another state. All other states use the NAPLEX exam. If you do this, you must designate California as a score transfer state before you take the NAPLEX, AND you must take the NAPLEX after January 1, 2004. (Please refer to the Score Transfer Bulletin available on the NABP website for more information.)

The NAPLEX/MPJE Examination Bulletin is available online (<http://www.nabp.net>). This manual will assist you in learning about the NAPLEX exam. The California Board of Pharmacy has no involvement with the development of the NAPLEX examination.

Some applicants may also seek to take the PreNAPLEX exam to assist in the test preparation for the NAPLEX. If so, contact the NABP Website for information (<http://www.nabp.net>).

The board is developing a Candidates' Guide for the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination. This guide will be available from the board's Web site once it is complete.

A copy of the content outline for the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination is available from http://www.pharmacy.ca.gov/pdfs/exam_outline.pdf.

The board will provide additional information to this Web site as it becomes available. Please be patient. We recognize how important it is to provide application information to you, we are still finalizing details for the process.

Questions and Answers:

The board will provide answers to frequently asked questions at this area of our Web site.

Should you have questions regarding the new examinations, please send them to anne_sodergren@dca.ca.gov. While you will not receive a direct response to your e-mail inquiry, the board will answer those questions with broad applicability. Other, more specific questions will not be answered at this time because many details about the exam program will not be available until the contracting processes are complete.

Questions concerning a specific individual's eligibility or application will not be answered.

Q: I passed the NAPLEX already and I am licensed in another state, how can I reciprocate my license?

A: The law does not allow for reciprocation. You are required to take and pass both the NAPLEX and California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination after January 1, 2004.

Q: When can I take the NAPLEX and California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Exam?

A: The law provides for acceptance of passing scores on the NAPLEX received after January 1, 2004. The board is currently developing the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination. Please continue to check the website for information as to when the California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination will be available.

Q: Are the NAPLEX and California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination computerized and multiple-choice examinations?

A: Yes

Q: I have already submitted an application for the January 2004 exam. What do I do?

A: The board will communicate to you in writing with further instructions as soon as procedures are finalized.

Q: When are the revised applications anticipated to be on your website?

A: The applications are currently under legal approval. The board anticipates the applications posted on this Web site in mid-November.

Q: If the board's applications won't be on the website until beginning to mid-November, how can I submit my application by the November 13, 2003 deadline?

A: The November 13, 2003, deadline will not apply to the NAPLEX or California Pharmacist Jurisprudence Examination. Because the board will no longer give its written examination, this deadline is no longer applicable.